



North American Societies

MAIN IDEA

CULTURAL INTERACTION
Complex North American societies were linked to each other through culture and economics.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Traditions and ideas from these cultures became part of the cultures of North America.

TERMS & NAMES

- potlatch
- Anasazi
- pueblo
- Mississippian
- Iroquois
- totem

SETTING THE STAGE Between 40,000 and 12,000 years ago, hunter-gatherers migrated across the Bering Strait land bridge from Asia and began to populate the Americas. Migrating southward, those first Americans reached the southern tip of South America by somewhere between 12,000 and 7000 B.C. At the same time, they began to spread out east and west across North America. Over the centuries, the early North American peoples adapted to their environment, creating a very diverse set of cultures.

Complex Societies in the West

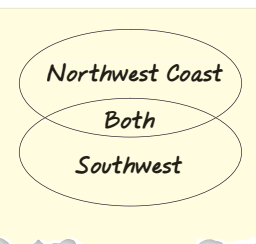
In some ways, the early North American cultures were less developed than those of South America and Mesoamerica. The North American groups created no great empires. They left few ruins as spectacular as those of ancient Mexico or Peru. Nevertheless, the first peoples of North America did create complex societies. These societies were able to conduct long-distance trade and construct magnificent buildings.

Cultures of Abundance The Pacific Northwest—from Oregon to Alaska—was rich in resources and supported a sizable population. To the Kwakiutl, Nootka, and Haida peoples, the most important resource was the sea. (See the map on page 442.) They hunted whales in canoes. Some canoes were large enough to carry at least 15 people. In addition to the many resources of the sea, the coastal forest provided plentiful food. In this abundant environment, the Northwest Coast tribes developed societies in which differences in wealth created social classes. Families displayed their rank and prosperity in an elaborate ceremony called the **potlatch** (PAHT•LACH). In this ceremony, they gave food, drink, and gifts to the community.

Accomplished Builders The dry, desert lands of the Southwest were a much harsher environment than the temperate Pacific coastlands. However, as early as 1500 B.C., the peoples of the Southwest were beginning to farm the land. Among the most successful of these early farmers were the Hohokam (huh•HOH•kuhm) of central Arizona. (See the map on page 439.) They used irrigation to produce harvests of corn, beans, and squash. Their use of pottery rather than baskets, as well as certain religious rituals, showed contact with Mesoamerican peoples to the south.

TAKING NOTES

Comparing and Contrasting Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the Native Americans of the Northwest and the Southwest.





North American Culture Areas, c. 1400



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Region** Which Native American culture groups had the largest number of tribes?
- Human-Environment Interaction** In which culture areas would movement of trade goods be made easier by river and lake connections?

A people to the north—the **Anasazi** (AH•nuh•SAH•zee)—also influenced the Hohokam. They lived in the Four Corners region, where the present-day states of Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico meet. The Anasazi built impressive cliff dwellings, such as the ones at Mesa Verde, Colorado. These large houses were built on top of mesas—flat-topped hills—or in shallow caves in the sheer walls of deep canyons. By the A.D. 900s, the Anasazi were living in **pueblos** (PWEHB•lohs), villages of large, apartment-style compounds made of stone and adobe, or sun-baked clay.

The largest Anasazi pueblo, begun around A.D. 900, was Pueblo Bonito, a Spanish name meaning “beautiful village.” Its construction required a high degree of social organization and inventiveness. The Anasazi relied on human labor to quarry sandstone from the canyon walls and move it to the site. Skilled builders then used a mudlike mortar to construct walls up to five stories high. Windows were small to keep out the burning sun. When completed, Pueblo Bonito probably housed about 1,000 people and contained more than 600 rooms. In addition, a number of underground or partly underground ceremonial chambers called kivas (KEE•vuhs) were used for a variety of religious practices.

Many Anasazi pueblos were abandoned around 1200, possibly because of a prolonged drought. The descendants of the Anasazi, the Pueblo peoples, continued many of their customs. Pueblo groups like the Hopi and Zuni used kivas for religious ceremonies. They also created beautiful pottery and woven blankets. They traded these, along with corn and other farm products, with Plains Indians to the east, who supplied bison meat and hides. These nomadic Plains tribes eventually became known by such names as the Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache.



▲ Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde, had 217 rooms and 23 kivas.

Mound Builders and Other Woodland Cultures

Beyond the Great Plains, in the woodlands east of the Mississippi River, other ancient peoples—the Mound Builders—were creating their own unique traditions. (See the map on page 439.) Beginning around 700 B.C., a culture known as the Adena began to build huge earthen mounds in which they buried their dead. Mounds that held the bodies of tribal leaders often were filled with gifts, such as finely crafted copper and stone objects.

Some 500 years later, the Hopewell culture also began building burial mounds. Their mounds were much larger and more plentiful than those of the Adena. Some of the Hopewell mounds may have been used for purposes other than burials. For example, the Great Serpent Mound, near Hillsboro, Ohio, may have played a part in Hopewell religious ceremonies.

The last Mound Builder culture, the **Mississippian**, lasted from around A.D. 800 until the arrival of Europeans in the 1500s. These people created thriving villages based on farming and trade. Between 1000 and 1200, perhaps as many as 30,000



▲ Great Serpent Mound runs some 1,300 feet along its coils and is between 4 and 5 feet high.

people lived at Cahokia (kuh•HOH•kee•uh), the leading site of Mississippian culture. Cahokia was led by priest-rulers, who regulated farming activities. The heart of the community was a 100-foot-high, flat-topped earthen pyramid, which was crowned by a wooden temple.

These Mississippian lands were located in a crossroads region between east and west. They enjoyed easy transportation on the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Items found in burial mounds show that the Mississippians had traded with peoples in the West and, possibly, Mesoamerica. Similar evidence shows that they also came into contact with peoples from the Northeast.

Northeastern Tribes Build Alliances The northeastern woodlands tribes developed a variety of cultures. The woodlands peoples often clashed with each other over land. In some areas, tribes formed political alliances to ensure protection of tribal lands. The best example of a political alliance was the **Iroquois** (IHR•uh•kwoy), a group of tribes speaking related languages living in the eastern Great Lakes region. In the late 1500s, five of these tribes in upper New York—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca—formed the Iroquois League. According to legend, Chief Hiawatha helped to create this league. His goal was to promote joint defense and cooperation among the tribes. **A**

MAIN IDEA

Drawing Conclusions

A Of what value would a political alliance be to an individual tribe?

Cultural Connections

The Iroquois alliance was a notable example of a political link among early North American peoples. For the most part, however, the connections between native North Americans were economic and cultural. They traded, had similar religious beliefs, and shared social patterns.

Trading Networks Tie Tribes Together Trade was a major factor linking the peoples of North America. Along the Columbia River in Oregon, the Chinook people established a lively marketplace that brought together trade goods from all over the West. And the Mississippian trade network stretched from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic coast and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico.

Religion Shapes Views of Life Another feature that linked early Americans was their religious beliefs. Nearly all native North Americans believed that the world around them was filled with nature spirits. Most Native Americans recognized a number of sacred spirits. Some groups held up one supreme being, or Great Spirit, above all others. North American peoples believed that the spirits gave them rituals and customs to guide them in their lives and to satisfy their basic needs. If people practiced these rituals, they would live in peace and harmony.

Native American religious beliefs also included great respect for the land as the source of life. Native Americans used the land but tried to alter it as little as possible. The land was sacred, not something that could be bought and sold. Later, when Europeans claimed land in North America, the issue of land ownership created conflict.

Shared Social Patterns The family was the basis for social organization for Native Americans. Generally, the family unit was the extended family, including parents, children, grandparents, and other close relatives. Some tribes further organized families into clans, groups of families descended from a common ancestor. In some tribes, clan members lived together in large houses or groups of houses.

Common among Native American clans was the use of **totems** (TOH•tuhmz). The term refers to a natural object with which an individual, clan, or group identifies itself. The totem was used as a symbol of the unity of a group or clan. It also helped define certain behaviors and the social relationships of a group. The term comes from an Ojibwa word, but refers to a cultural practice found throughout the Americas. For example, Northwestern peoples displayed totem symbols on masks, boats, and huge poles set in front of their houses. Others used totem symbols in rituals or dances associated with important group events such as marriages, the naming of children, or the planting or harvesting of crops. **B**

There were hundreds of different patterns of Native American life in North America. Some societies were small and dealt with life in a limited region of the vast North American continent. Other groups were much larger, and were linked by trade and culture to other groups in North America and Mesoamerica. As you will learn in Section 2, peoples in Mesoamerica and South America also lived in societies that varied from simple to complex. Three of these cultures—the Maya, the Aztec, and the Incan—would develop very sophisticated ways of life.

Social History

Iroquois Women

Iroquois society was matrilineal. This means that all Iroquois traced their descent through their female ancestors. Clans of the mother controlled property, held ceremonies, and determined official titles.

The ability to grant titles to men was handed down from mother to daughter. The most important title given to men was that of "sachem," the peace, or civil, chief.

A council of sachems met once a year to decide on war and peace and other important matters. Since sachems could not go to war, they appointed warriors to lead a war party. Thus, in a way women had a say in warfare in the Iroquois tribes.

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

B What artificial symbols are used by nations or organizations in a way similar to totems?

SECTION

1

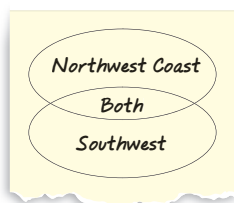
ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- potlatch
- Anasazi
- pueblo
- Mississippian
- Iroquois
- totem

USING YOUR NOTES

2. How did environment affect the development of the cultures of the Northwest Coast and the Southwest?



MAIN IDEAS

3. What was the most important resource for the peoples of the Northwest? Why?
4. For what purpose did the Mound Builder cultures use earthen mounds?
5. Why did the tribes of upper New York form a political alliance?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **ANALYZING MOTIVES** Why might the people of the Northwest consider the potlatch to be a good way to signal social standing and wealth?
7. **ANALYZING CAUSES** Why might location have been important to the power and wealth of the Mississippian culture?
8. **COMPARING** In what ways did the peoples of North America share similar cultural patterns?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **CULTURAL INTERACTION** Write a brief essay detailing the evidence that shows how societies in North America interacted with each other.

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY

Use the Internet to research one of the Native American groups discussed in this section. Use your findings to write an **illustrated report**. Focus your report on how the group lives today.

INTERNET KEYWORD

Native American Nations